

The Bachara's ... From Poland to Paulina

Jan Bachara:

Born 18 November 1875 Lukanowice, Austrian Poland
Died 28 October 1942 Chicago, Illinois

Victoria Plocica Bachara:

Born 2 August 1879 Grudna Gorna, Austrian Poland
Died 26 November 1958 Chicago, Illinois

Part One

Near the Polish village of Lukanowice, about six miles west of Tarnow, and about twenty miles east of the ancient capital of Krakow, the wedding of Jan Bachara and Maria Pyzyk had just taken place in the Wojnicz parish church. The villages like Lukanowice are part of a countryside that is principally rural with rolling hills and a landscape that has changed little over the centuries.

It was the 3rd day of February 1875 the feast day of St. Blazej (Blasé). After the wedding was over, most of the parishioners lined-up and shuffled slowly to the altar for the blessing of their throats with crossed candles and holy oil that had been blessed the previous Easter Thursday. The very old parishioners that had difficulty walking remained in the worn pews waiting for the priest to come to them for their blessing. It was one of the many Catholic rituals performed in countless churches throughout Poland that morning.

St. Blasé was a fourth century Armenian bishop and martyr. Because he is said to have saved the life of a boy who had swallowed a fishbone, he is invoked against sore throats.

It had been an unseasonably mild Polish winter and there was an unusual thaw that had begun four days earlier. Most of the neighboring villagers closed their doors and all the peasant farmers came to congratulate Jan and kiss his new bride. Jan was one of them...a man of their land.

The Bachara families took a great deal of pride in their small farms and in their nearby village of Lukanowice. They had lived in the region for countless generations and were well thought of as being fair, reasonable people. Good neighbors to have. They were trusted and always available with helping hands when needed. Especially when there was a good harvest and the crops were ripe for the gathering.

Before the wedding Jan and Maria participated in an ancient Polish tradition in their village...the abduction of the bride by her groom. Maria, wearing her wedding dress, stood before her parents and guests awaiting the arrival of her groom. He and his friends, who were in the wedding party, rode up on horseback. Jan quickly lifted Maria onto his horse and carried her off to the church.

Jan Bachara, who was born April 29, 1850, was now a handsome man of twenty-four. He had won out over all the other young men in Lukanowice and in the nearby villages for the favor and hand of his Maria.

The Pyzyk family, Josef her father and Anna her mother, cried all through the ceremony. They were tears of happiness for their pretty nineteen year old daughter.

She had long flaxen braids woven among blue and white ribbons. They were wrapped on the top of her head. Her gray piercing eyes would sparkle in the candlelight of the evening.

There were many toasts of honey-brandied (Krupnik) laced with Josef Pyzyk's home made vodka. Glasses were raised time after time at the slightest suggestion of a toast, all that day and evening to the new bride and groom, the newest pan I pani Bachara. They all laughed and shouted when the guests chased and captured the newly married couple. They only released them after Maria's mother paid them the required ransom of vodka. Maria's father offered the new couple the traditional gifts of bread and salt and again gave them his blessing.

For weeks afterward, the villagers of Lukanowice would smile and chat among themselves when they passed on the streets and in neighboring

Wojnicz going to and from mass. Farmers and villagers alike would say fine things about the good time they heard everyone say that they had at the Bachara wedding.

They kept recalling how elegant and delicious the evening banquet meal was at Anton Guzik's Karchma (Tavern). It consisted of steaming bowls of clear borscht (beet soup). Then came trays of white asparagus, marinated mushrooms, slices of Guzik's oscypek (smoked sheep cheese) and pickled cucumbers. Then came a huge platter, steaming from the kuchnia (kitchen) of the karczma. It was mounted with tiny golabkis (cabbage rolls) and cheese and plum pierogies. To compliment these mouth-watering Polish appetizers, came the main meal. First they had roast pork and deer meat with bigos (hunter's stew) and boiled new potatoes in dill butter.

Finally for dessert, they were all delighted with Pani Anna Pyzyk's (Maria's mother) baked apples and cheese crusted koloc-bread sprinkled with czarnuszka (Russian caraway seeds).

Time after time during the dinner, glasses were clinked with silverware prompting a bridal kiss.

Shouts of "Sto Lat" and "Na zdrowie" rang in the dining room all that evening.

How handsome a couple the new bride and groom made, and how proud Mr. and Mrs. Pyzyk should be to have Jan Bachara as their new son-in-law.

For centuries, Polish hospitality called for ample food, which guests seldom declined. But the guest that takes food without encouragement disgraces himself. In the nearby Tatra mountain region south of Lukanowice, the party-host plays the traditional role of 'nunac', "The one who urges". He urges-on the guests to continue eating. One wedding guest, an old story goes, returned home after a two-day feast, unhappy and hungry. "Was there no food?" asked his wife. "Yes, but no nunac," he growled.

An ethnic Polish wedding was and perhaps always shall be an event to fondly recall for many years. This new, young, happy couple, Jan and Maria Bachara, many years after their deaths in Lukanowice, would become my paternal great grandparents.

For the next few months during the spring and summer of 1875, Jan and Maria began earnestly saving for their own small farm, while they lived at the edge of the village of Lukanowice in Cottage No. 12.

It was a small four-room cottage that they rented from Mr. Bogusz Truszko.

Truszek was considered to be a wealthy man for the area. He was a house wares and furniture merchant who lived in Tarnow. He owned several cottages in Lukanowice as well as in the neighboring villages of Zakluczyn, Zamoscie, Grabno and Debina. He seemed to enjoy more being a landlord than a merchant. He was a fair landlord. He charged Jan and Maria a modest rent. Better a small rent, he felt, than to have the cottage remain vacant. Some rent was better than no rent. This, as a merchant, he knew in his bones.

The cottage, in the fall prior to the wedding, had been completely re-decorated and re-furnished. It was filled with carved furniture painted in bright colors. It had embroidered curtains and potted flowers in the windows. The walls were painted white with traditional flower patterns near the ceilings. In the combination living room and bedroom, floral patterns on paper and canvas called "malowanki" adorned the wall.

All the decorating was completed by November 2, All Souls Day.

The feast of All Souls Day is celebrated in a very solemn manner throughout Poland. In the villages near Lukanowice, the people make pilgrimages to the church cemetery at Wojnicz. There they decorate the graves with chrysanthemums, asters and fall flowers. Then they place candles and votive lights. When the graves are decorated you can see

countless flickering flames casting their haunting shadows in the dusk as the mood is set for an outdoor mass and prayers for the departed souls. It was a haunting sight for me near a village in Zakopane, in the far south of Poland in the foothills of the Tatra Mountains.

When he wasn't working on his father's farm during the winter and before the spring planting began, Jan mended leather harnesses and repaired broken farm tools for the farmers in the area who were too old or feeble to do the work themselves or for those that could afford to have Jan make the necessary repairs for them.

After the rent money was set-aside for Pan Truszko, the few zloty's that Jan earned making the repairs would go directly into his and Maria's savings for the farm. Jan and Maria were very frugal. They learned that very early in the south of Poland.

Maria's hands were hardly ever idle. She had learned her skills as both seamstress and baker from her mother, Anna.

While the pastries and breads that she sold in the village were baking in the brick oven in the cottage, she sat by the window and mended shirts and trousers for anyone who could pay for her service. There were enough torn clothes in the area to keep her as busy as she wanted to be. After all, she

too was saving her zlotys for the farm that they wanted. One morning Pani (Mrs.) Zosia Dulska came to the cottage with enough torn shirts and jackets to keep Maria busy for the next four days. Zosia had three teen-aged boys on her and Jakob's small farm on the outskirts of Lukanowice. Zosia's knuckles were swollen and gnarled so badly from her arthritis that she was unable to handle a needle. Zosia was a very good customer and Maria charged her a little less.

When the sun went down behind the grove of larch trees and she couldn't sew by the window any longer, Maria took her sewing bag and sat on the side of the bed sewing by candlelight and the flames from the fireplace across the tiny room.

But making pastries, cakes and breads both on top of the stove and in the brick oven were her passion. She tried to bake every day that she could.

On the stovetop she fried paczki (Polish donuts) with and without fruit. Pan Truszek liked them without fruit. Maria always set aside two dozen for him on the first of the month when he came for the rent.

She also liked frying chrusciki (Bow knot crullers). In the brick oven she baked plum cakes, szarlotka (Apple cake) and blueberry and pumpkin breads. When the cherries were in season she was constantly baking pies and

tarts. Those that she and Jan didn't eat went into the village market for sale. They didn't last very long on the selling tables and were eagerly bought or bartered for by the villagers of Lukanowice.

Mrs. Ulatowska usually would take a dozen raspberry paczki for she and her husband Adam's Saturday breakfast. She usually bartered two dozen eggs for the donuts.

Another talent that Maria brought 'from home' was her Grandmother Pyzyk's skill in making soup.

In the Pyzyk kitchen there always was a pot of soup on the back of the stove. There were hot soups for each day of the fall and winter. There was czarnina (Duck soup) on Sunday's, tripe soup, barszcz (beet soup), mushroom soup, fish soup, barley soup, and a fat hen could always produce a pot of chicken soup.

In the warm Polish summer months Busia Pyzyk would make cold fruit soups, cold cucumber soup and cold beet soup. Maria watched, helped and never ceased to ask questions about the herbs, spices and measures. Of course she had to know and measure just how much amounted to a 'pinch of this' in her grandmother's wrinkled hands.

She learned her skills well from Busia Pyzyk. Jan was grateful for what Maria learned and now brought to the new Bachara household.

Maria's love for baking lasted each year from early spring through the late fall or until the supply of her main sweetening agent dried-up. It was the honey from Jan's bees.

During the winter months Jan's honeybees became dormant and went into hibernation.

Jan Bachara had become fascinated with bees and beekeeping as a teen-ager. Over the years as a hobby, he had built and maintained over fifty hives of bees on his father's farm. Some in Lukanowice even considered him to be the village beekeeper.

Jan had learned from his old Uncle Andrzej (Andrew) that the different colors and flavors of honey depended upon the kind of flower from which the nectar was taken by the worker bees back to the hives and made it into honey.

After much experimentation Jan moved his beehives to the side of the farm that was near a clover field. That type of clover he discovered produced the sweetest nectar that was stored in the hive beeswax cells. It became premium-grade honey.

Every Saturday during the summer and fall months, Jan sold his premium honey at the farmer's market in Tarnow. Since it was six miles from Lukanowice to Tarnow, he had to get up before sunrise to hitch the horse to the two-wheeled cart and make the slow trip.

He started selling the honey in stone crock quarts but business was so good that he expanded to quart and gallon tin pails that he purchased at Pan Truszko's store. Truszko sold the pails to Jan at his wholesale price since he always paid the rent on time. He couldn't say that about all of his tenants. Jan did quite well selling his premium honey at the Tarnow market.

Jan and Maria's closest neighbors to the east of the village were Maria's parents, Jozef and Anna (Strojny) Pyzyk. They were both born in Lukanowice between the years 1820 and 1835. They too were baptized and married at the Wojnicz parish church sometime between 1850 and 1855.

The history of the Wojnicz area dates back to the Eleventh century and is rather interesting. A brief translation from the Słownik Geograficzny (Geographical Dictionary) follows. It was published at the end of the Nineteenth Century in the old Polish style of writing.

Wojnicz is a town in the administrative district of Brzesk, located at the crossing of the roads from Brzesk to Tarnow (from west to east) and

from Zakluczyn to Radlow (from south to north). In bygone days, Wojnicz, together with some villages, formed a starost (district) built with only wooden houses. The villagers lived mostly from agriculture, crafts, commerce and small trade. This poor, small town was only one of thousands of ancient settlements.

The Wojnicz castle, of which there is no trace, supposedly was standing on the south part of the town, and according to local legend, was destroyed by the Swedes in the year 1655. Wojnicz as an ancient settlement, became of great trade significance because of its location at the crossing of the important trade roads in the vicinity of the Dunajec River. The farmers, mountaineers, manufactures from Krakow, and the merchants wandering from Russia to Krakow, and from Hungary towards the north, met in Wojnicz and exchanged their products and commodities.

Another historical record of Wojnicz

is as follows:

In the year 1097 legends say a small church came into existence in the Wojnicz area named St. Leonard's Church. According to tradition, it was blessed by St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr.

In the year 1217 according to documents, the first governor of the castle "Symil do Wojnicza" was seen by the side of Leszek. (The reference here is to Duke Keszek I the White. He was born in 1185 and was the son of Casimir II the Just. Leszek had been expelled by the tyrant Mieszko III the old in 1200, but recovered the throne in 1202.

In the year 1363 King Casimir the Great released the burghers from Biecz and ordered them to pay taxes in Wojnicz.

In the year 1456 a new stone and brick church was built. It was named St. Lawrence and St. Margaret. The Archdeacon of Krakow established a parish with 4 missionaries.

In the year 1655 near Wojnicz, Karol Gustav of Sweden defeated the detachment of Stanislaw Lanckoronski, and forced the regular Polish army to take an oath of allegiance to Sweden. At the same time, the town of Wojnicz was plundered and ransacked.

The parish of Wojnicz, originally founded and built in 1456, became neglected because of lack of funds. A new brick church was built in 1773.

The public registers of birth, marriage and death are preserved since 1675.

The following villages belonged to the parish: Zamoscie, Biadoliny, Grabno, Letowice, Debina, Letowicka, Lopan, Lukanowicw, Mikolajowice, Sierachowice, Milowka, Ratnawy, Rudka, Wielkawies, Wielkowice, Zakrzow and Debina Zakrzowska.

A quarter-mile to the west of Lukanowice lived the other Bachara families on their small farms. Jan's widowed father lived the closest. He was Szymon Bachara who was born on October 23, 1806 and was baptized the next week at Wojnicz. His wife, Jan's mother, was Katarzyna. She was born nine years later than her husband in 1815. Katarzyna Bachara had died of tuberculosis at their small farm home on March 9, 1871 at the age of fifty-six. Katarzyna was the daughter of Szymon Wegrzyn and Teresa Pyrek, both of whom had been born in Lukanowice probably between 1770 and 1780.

During that time Poland had been defeated in war and did not exist any longer as a sovereign nation. Its lands had been partitioned among the Russians, the Prussians and the Austrians. Russia then ruled by Czarina Catherine the Great, annexed the eastern third of Poland. Prussia, then ruled by Frederick the Great, annexed the western third of Poland. The area

containing Wojnicz and the neighboring village of Lukanowice, in the south of the nation, was within a 30,000 square mile area then known as Galicia. This territory was designated a crown land under the rule of the House of Hapsburg-Lorraine. Maria Theresa, the daughter of Emperor Charles VI, then was the empress of Austria, ruling together with her son Joseph II. Into this scenario the future Bachara generation would be born, married and died.

When Szymon Bachara was born on October 23, 1806 it was during the reign of Emperor of Austria Francis II, son of Leopold II, Holy Roman Emperor until 1806, the end of the Holy Roman Emperor. The year before saw Thomas Jefferson beginning his second term as President of the United States of America and Prussia declared war on France.

As he grew into manhood Szymon Bachara was a simple farmer as his ancestors had been, far removed from the nobility in the courts at Krakow, Vienna and Paris.

Szymon Bachara married Katarzyna Wegrzyn in the parish church at Wojnicz on November 7, 1831. He was twenty-five, she was sixteen or seventeen. Jan and Brygida (Skorka) Bachara were Szymon's parents. They too were probably born in Lukanowice between 1770 and 1780 as were Katarzyna's parents.

Szymon and Katarzyna (Wegrzyn) Bachara had at least one other child besides Jan. They had a daughter Marie born April 3, 1845. She and her younger brother Jan were subjects of Ferdinand I, the then reigning Emperor of Austria.

Marie Bachara married Franciszek Bachara on February 6, 1866 at Wojnicz. It is likely that they were second or third cousins. Franciszek Bachara was the son of Wojciech and Madeline (Mikuta) Bachara. Marie Bachara died on February 2, 1829 in Lukanowice at the age of eighty-three. It is unlikely that she or Franciszek ever left Lukanowice.

Most of the generations-old Bachara, Pyzyk and Wegrzyn family farms in that area of Galicia were on 'bottom land' with a more than adequate amount of rich, fertile top soil. This was nature's way of a meager rewarding for the hard working peasant farmers in the valleys after the frequent driving rainstorms and ensuing run-offs. It is a paradox the world over among farmers...those who work the fertile bottom land have a tendency to 'look down' on the hill farmers whose land covers the hills and ridges with more stones and rocks than top-soil uncovered by each spring's plowing.

The Bachara, Pyzyk and Wegrzyn farms and cottages were very similar to the other farms and thatched wooded cottages. White ducks, black

and brown chickens ran freely around the gardens. Most of the barns and cottages had folk paintings on the walls with colorful, mostly floral designs.

The farms were rather small in acreage and barely large enough to support their toilers. Very few families had more than forty acres. Most had twenty. Poland lies at the heart of Europe's agricultural half. One in three Poles live in the countryside which looks much as it did centuries ago, when the women milked the cows, went to the village market and spent the day in the kuchnia preparing meals for their families.

As the sun rose each morning with silent splendor over the hand-cultivated hills and valleys near Lukanowice, the men left their farm cottages and went to feed their livestock. Each morning Jan Bachara fed their two horses, six pigs with litters and three cows before working the fields. As the sun set slowly in the cloudless western sky over the small farming villages, Jan would wipe the sweat from his brow and unharness the horse from its crude iron plow. In a few weeks he would look down unhappily at the hard, dry soil and pray the rain would come soon to save his now thirsting beets and cabbages.

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He had carefully planted each seedling while kneeling and patting it down in the warm Polish sun. The seedlings were started the previous month from last year's seeds that he saved.

What mattered most to Jan, with his bushy dark mustache and thin frame, was his family, his friends, his soil and his church. He rested his leathery face on his soil-stained thickly calloused hands and wondered if anyone would ever be aware or even care of his existence, there in southern Poland.

At nightfall in the darkness he would put the horse in its yard and go home for supper in the century-old four room wooden cottage on the farm that he had worked so very hard.

Jan and Maria's small farm produced beets, cabbages, potatoes and some barley. The mainstay of their existence however, came from the raising and selling of their pigs. A Polish staple is pork. The pigs, after one or two were set aside for family consumption, were eagerly purchased by the Lukanowice and Wojnicz villagers. Those that were left were sold in Tarnow at a good price. Jan's pigs always got a good price. The ride to Tarnow with the pigs in the cold November rain was worth it.

As summer was drawing to an end, Jan and Maria celebrated the 'Feast of Greenery'. It took place each year on the 8th of September, the feast day of Mary's birth.

The farmers from the surrounding area brought to the Wojnicz church great bunches of vegetables, herbs and corn. They were made into bouquets which were interwoven with flowers from the fields and gardens. The priest blessed the bouquets and the farmers took them home and kept them until the same day of the following year. When there was sickness in the house,

the herbs were brewed into a tea and used for medicinal purposes for both the people and the livestock.

A few months passed, the weather changed, and on November 18, 1875, the feast day of St. Aniela, their first of five surviving sons was born at their farm cottage. They christened him in the church where they were married at Wojnicz.

His name was Jan, as was his father's. He was to become my paternal grandfather.

After Jan was born, several infant deaths and burials in the Wojnicz church yard were endured by Jan and Maria. Their second surviving son, Szymon, was born on December 3, 1881 when his brother Jan was six. Their next was a girl. Anna was born on February 1, 1884. Anna was followed by her three younger brothers: Wladislaw (Walter) born April 12, 1886; Andrzej (Andrew) born in 1891 and their last son Blazej (Robert) who was born on January 30, 1898.

As any Polish farmer would probably tell you, Jan Bachara would have boasted of his sons. He would pridefully tell everyone in Lukanowice of his good fortune in fathering five healthy strong-minded sons to help him with the endless daily chores on the farm which he inherited from his father,

Szymon, who had died on March 11, 1884 at the age of seventy-seven.

Szymon Bachara was buried in the Wojnicz churchyard the month after his little grandchild Anna was born.

The years passed for the Bachara's in southern Poland. The sun rose and set every day without too many problems for them on their small farm. There were difficulties at times, but somehow they managed to survive.

The crops each year were sown in the spring by hand and harvested in the fall by hand. The pigs had their litters and the times were uneventful.

Anna and her brothers grew throughout childhood and into adolescence. Each had made their first Holy Communion, a few years apart, in the church at Wojnicz.

They, as a family, celebrated their 'Wigilia's' (Vigil Dinners) on Christmas Eve, and their ' Swieconka's ' (Blessed Easter meals) at Easter.

On Holy Saturdays, Maria and Anna carried a basket filled with hard boiled eggs, hams, fresh and smoked sausage, pastries and Easter seasonings like fresh horseradish to be blessed by the parish priest at Wojnicz. This was the 'Swieconka', the blessed meal to be eaten on Easter morning after mass.

On Christmas Eve the Bachara family would partake in a seven-course meatless meal after returning from the church services at

Wojnicz. There was herring purchased from the huge barrels in Tarnow and mushrooms that had been pickled. There was baked sauerkraut with yellow peas, fresh fish with lemon rings, pike with horseradish sauce, dried fruit, pastries, coffee, nuts and candies. This was known as the 'Wigilia', the Vigil Dinner. On the snow-white tablecloth an extra plate was set for any unexpected guest. A small amount of straw was placed under the plate to symbolize Jesus' birth in a manger. 'Wigalia' was the most Polish day of the year.

Because of their age differences, Jan was closer to his brother Szymon than he was to Andrzej or Wladislaw. Anna was quite close to her mother, being the only daughter. From time to time Anna would ask her mother to tell her again about the legend of "Queen Kinga's Dowry". Maria loved the legend and smilingly obliged. It went like this...

Queen Kinga's Dowry

Long, long ago during the eleventh century, the King of Hungary brought Princess Kinga, his daughter, the happy news that she was to marry the Prince of Poland, who was called Wladyslaus the Shy. "What is more," said the old king, "you may have anything you want as your dowry."

Now, a dowry is a wedding gift from her family which the bride brings to her new husband to share in their life together. The dowry of a princess is most often a fortune in gold and jewels. But, to her father's amazement, Kinga said "the only thing I want for my dowry is a salt mine."

In those times salt was very costly and important because it was the only thing the people had that kept food from spoiling. Hungary had become a wealthy kingdom because of its salt mines. The king could not give one of these precious mines even to his beloved daughter and she left for Poland with many other gifts but without the dowry she wanted most.

When she arrived, Kinga asked if there were any salt mines in Poland. She was told that there had been a small one near the town of Wieliczka, but that all the salt had been taken from it. She asked to see the mine. The townspeople, who were poor now that their mine no longer provided work for the-----, gathered near the pit to greet their royal visitor. Imagine their surprise when the Princess took her engagement ring from her finger and dropped it down into the mine-shaft!

"Please dig in the mine to find my ring," Kinga said to the people. "Whoever finds it shall have a rich reward. As you look for the ring, dig deeper and try to find more salt because our country needs salt badly."

Weeks later, at the wedding feast of Wladyslaus and Kinga, the people of Wieliczka announced that the large new deposits of salt had been found in the mine and presented the couple with a great block of salt. Inside it was Kinga's engagement ring! Nobody would claim the reward; the people of her new land had given their queen her dowry.

Salt from Poland's mine was traded all over the world for gold, spices, silks and satins. The country became richer and every single person lived better because of the salt. The mine at Wieliczka grew enormous, with miles and miles of tunnels and still produces salt today. Furthermore, in a huge room deep in the earth the miners have built a beautiful chapel named for Queen Kinga, their patron.

The Bachara boys were probably close to their fathers. They certainly respected him. Jan and Szymon would walk together to the one room schoolhouse in the village whenever the weather permitted and they weren't needed to work on the farm. That was rather seldom. Education in southern Poland was a luxury farmers could hardly afford.

In the summer of 1898 when Jan was twenty-two and Szymon was sixteen, they went to Tarnow for a replacement blade for their father's iron plow. As they rode together in the family wagon, they talked about the hard

times they were having on the farm. Beet and Cabbage prices were falling and it was getting hard to sell the [pigs at a profit. With conscription in Emperor Franz Joseph's Austrian army ever increasing, they knew that their chances of avoiding the hated military life were getting slimmer. Jan had begun saving his zlotys for some time now and started to plan for leaving Poland.

A few weeks later the German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin would build his famous airship that would change the course of future warfare. That year the United States declared war on Spain over Cuba and the American fleet destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay in the Philippines.

They discussed emigrating to America over and over again. To Jan and Szymon, America was a land of unlimited opportunity and peace. It was a place in the world where one state or nation was not constantly at war and killing was not the normal way of life as it was in central and eastern Europe.

As they rode in the wagon pulled by one of their father's two healthy remaining horses, they talked about the terrible massacres that they had heard of, that were being done by the Turk's to the Armenians. Now that William II took the German throne and declared himself to be 'Kaiser

Wilhelm II', peace would become very fragile in central Europe. They knew that war clouds were gathering over and over their small section of the world. Soon Jan would have to make the irrevocable decision... stay in Poland and become a conscripted soldier serving the Austrian crown, or leave his parents and brothers and sister Anna and seek peace and a better life in America.

He finally made his decision the following fall, in November 1899. The Boer War had just begun with England and South African Boer's. Canadian and Australian volunteers were landing in South Africa to fight the Africans of Dutch descent, while the German 'Kaiser' visited Queen Victoria in England.

Part Two

Jan Bachara left his home in Poland at the age of twenty-three and headed northwest to Holland. He had been saving his share of the meager profits from the livestock and crop sales and now he felt that he had enough for the train-fare to Holland and a one-way steamship ticket to the United States of America.

On the warm November day that he made his tearful goodbyes, he knew there would be no returning to Poland. He hugged and kissed his parents, Jan and Maria first. Then his brothers Szymon, Walter, and Andrew who were eighteen, fourteen, and eight years old respectively. Next he hugged and kissed his pretty sister Anna who was a young lady of fifteen then. His baby brother Blazej was almost two years old. He lifted him from the floor of the cottage, kissed him twice, and handed him to his sister Anna. They all had tears in their eyes.

Jan made his way by rail in a northwesterly direction across Poland and into Germany. Szymon had taken him in the horse-drawn wagon from their home in Lukanowice to the train station at Bogumilowice.

There he bought a one-way ticket on the west-bound train to Krakow. In Krakow he spent the night and the following morning purchased a one-way ticket on the northbound train to Warsaw. In Warsaw, he again changed trains and took a seat on the Berlin Express. This train was the finest of the three.

The following morning he was in Berlin, the capital of Germany. He was tired and spent the evening in a modest hotel. The next morning he had

breakfast and again boarded another train. This one was bound for Hamburg. Early that evening it arrived on time in Hamburg. Jan decided to wait the next few hours in the station, and took a nap on the bench. He was awakened by the conductor who announced the departure of the express to Rotterdam, Holland and the North Sea.

When he finally arrived in Rotterdam he was nearly exhausted from the long, hard journey from Lukanowice. He found the Dutch lowlands very cold and damp in mid-November of 1899. He made an inquiry at the train station and went to a rooming house not far from the docks. He paid the attendant a week's rent in advance, went into his room, took off his shoes, and fell asleep across the bed.

It was easy for Jan to find work on the docks as a manual laborer. The next steamship departing for New York with space available would be in early January, 1900. He knew he would be busy with his new work until then.

He had just finished his breakfast of potato pancakes, smoked sausage, dark bread with sweet butter and black coffee. He enjoyed eating at Jacob Bol's 'De Zwann Café.' The food was always tasty and fresh and Frau Bol was a pleasant lady to talk with. Jan ate there often.

The café was three streets away from Pier 4 where the 'Maasdam' was docked. After breakfast he would walk to the docks where he worked. On Sundays he slept late. The Catholic churches were too far away from the docks and his rooming-house. He missed mass for a few weeks. He would make up for that when he got to America.

The ship was taking on its provisions for the twelve-day crossing of the North Sea and then the Atlantic Ocean.

It was a mild January morning in Rotterdam that day in the year 1900. It was the beginning of the new decade. It had not snowed for five days and the forecast was for a few more clear days that would be spent at sea.

As Jan Bachara walked towards the ticket window in the terminal building, he could clearly see the ship through the large windows facing the busy harbor. Jan paid the third-class one-way fare, including meals. It was thirty dollars. He paid in Dutch guilders. The work he had done on the docks for the past few weeks was hard. He had been used to hard work on the farm. The guilders he had earned were very helpful in paying for the steamship ticket.

Jan folded the large steamship ticket and put it in his inside coat pocket. He still had four more hours until the scheduled departure time of

1:00 P.M. Captain Ruts was planning on making the high-tide that afternoon.

Jan walked out on the dock to get a closer look at the huge ship that would take him to America.

Her name on the starboard bow was clearly visible from where he stood. It was the newly-painted, eight-inch white letters... 'Maasdam-Rotterdam'.

She had been built in 1871 by Harland & Wolff Ltd. in Belfast, Ireland for the White Star Line. Her original name was 'Republic'. Her tonnage was listed at 3,984. She was 426 feet long and 41 feet wide. The ship was powered by compound engines which drove a single propeller and was capable of a maximum speed of 15 knots. She had four masts for sails and one funnel. Her hull was iron. She made her maiden voyage between Liverpool, England and New York on February 1, 1872.

That year Ulysses S. Grant was reelected President of the United States of America.

The ship had stayed in that service for the White Star Line until the firm had run into financial difficulties. To raise cash, some assets had to be sold and 'Republic' was selected from their fleet. The Holland-American

Line purchased her in 1889; renamed the ship 'Maasdam' and put her into service for the Rotterdam to New York runs.

The following year, 1890, new triple expansion engines and boilers were installed.

Two years after she would take Jan Bachara to America, 'Maasdam' was sold again. This time to the LaVeloce Line (Italian) and renamed 'Vittoria'. Later that year, 1902, she was renamed again, this time 'Citta di Napoli' and placed in Genoa-New York service until 1910 when she was scrapped in Italy.

As Jan Bachara stood on the Rotterdam dock that morning, January 14, 1900, he was awed by the enormity of what he saw. As ten o'clock chimed from a church tower unseen in the distance, the dock became crowded. It seemed to Jan that nearly everyone in Holland was coming to leave. There were single men like him. There were girls with babies. There were entire families. The men and women were from all parts of Europe. Some had appearances that he had never seen before this morning. Where did they all come from, he wondered?

By one o'clock everything was loaded and all the passengers were aboard. Captain Ruts gave the signal to cast off all lines and 'Maasdam' began to move. Hundreds of people stood on the dock, waving goodbye. A brass band played old German and Dutch songs. Most of the people at the ship's rails and those on the dock were crying. No one really knew when or even if they would see their homelands or families again. Jan surely must have been very saddened and frightened. What would it be like? Was America really what he had heard it was? He knew it was worth the effort to find out for himself.

He was below the third deck now and he could still hear the music as the ship moved farther and farther from the Dutch shoreline. Further down in the vessel was the 4th class or the 'steerage section.' He had saved to afford more than that.

When he boarded he was assigned to Men's Wardroom No. 7. Each wardroom slept twelve people in six rows of double bunks. They were assigned bunks and certain seats where they were to eat their two sparse meals a day. Their third-class meal-room fed 48 at each of four sittings. It was a far cry from the floating hotels of today. Most of the time Jan was

seasick and stayed close to his pail by his assigned bunk. He was one of the lucky ones in his wardroom. He drew a lower bunk in row two.

By the fourth day out at sea, he had gotten to know, rather well, most of his wardroom companions. There was Otto Anderson and Arthur Janssen, both were carpenters. Jozef Walinski, Walter Golosinski and Walenty Bizub were laborers. Jan, Ludwik, Michael and Leo Legowski were cousins from near Warsaw. Leo talked the most. The other men were not very friendly. That was alright with Jan. He knew that he would probably never see them again after they landed in New York.

Several of the men in Wardroom No. 6 had come from Prussian Poland and he easily made friends with them also. By the sixth day out they were all seasick. 'Maasdam' was now about sixteen hundred miles out into the North Atlantic. The next five days of the voyage found the weather improving. Sick as they all were, they could only hold down one meal a day to maintain their strength. The next day and a half was a nightmare! The wind had shifted and hit the 'Maasdam' with nearly gale force. The waves were six to eight feet high. The North Atlantic showed Jan just how terrible an ocean could be in a winter storm. Jan, as did most of his roommates,

literally lashed themselves in their bunks with their belts. They had to do this to keep from being thrown back and forth across the wardroom.

On the morning of January 26, 1900 the storm had ended. Jan and some of the men went up to the top deck for fresh air. The smell from all the vomit in the wardroom was no longer bearable. They had to get some fresh air if only for a minute or two.

Jan's first impressions of his new world would always be etched in his memory. Through a light fog he could barely see Ellis Island. The 'Maasdam', filled to near capacity with Poles, Dutch, Hungarians, and a dozen other nationalities after twelve days out of Rotterdam, had weathered one of the worst North Atlantic storms in Captain Rut's memory.

He was glad to leave the open sea and finally come through the 'Narrows' and into the bay. Jan and his new friends said prayers of gratitude that they had come through the storm safely. They clustered on the foredeck and stared with wonder at the land directly ahead of them. Passengers all around him crowded against the rails. Jabbering conversations, sharp cries, laughs and cheering...a steadily rising din filled the deck of the ship. Mothers and fathers lifted up their babies so that they too could see off to the

left, the Statue of Liberty. Jan looked at the statue with a sense of bewilderment, half-doubting its reality. Looming now through the lifting mist, it brought a hush to the deck of the 'Maasdam'. This symbol of America, this enormous expression of a new country, inspired awe in Jan.

The older people around him, burdened by a thousand memories of what they were leaving behind them, wept openly. Directly in front of the vessel half visible in the faintly colored haze, rose a second and even greater challenge to their imagination.

"Mountains!" cried Jan to his new friend Stanley Kowal. "Look at them, they are very strange," he said. "They are not like the Carpathians or the Tatras, why don't they have snow on them now in January?" Jan was staring at the New York skyline. Stanley laughed, looked at the skyscrapers and assured Jan that they were not mountains, but buildings. The tallest buildings in the world.

On every side the harbor offered its marvels to Jan. Tugs, barges, sluggish freighters and giant ocean liners all moving in different directions, all managing somehow by what seemed to him to be a miracle, without colliding with one another. Finally the 'Maasdam' veered to the left. It turned northward into the Hudson River. Now the incredible buildings of lower

Manhattan were coming very close to him. The Dutch officers of the ship went running up and down the decks shouting orders and pointing directions to the immigrants. Scowling and gesturing, they pushed and pulled passengers, herding them into separate groups as though they were animals.

A few minutes later 'Maasdam' was gently pushed by a tugboat against Pier 27 and all engines were stopped. The long voyage of Jan Bachara was over. He had traveled 3,376 nautical miles.

A small boat from the Immigration Service carried them in groups of forty, from the pier to the Barge Office on the 'Battery' which was a park at the southern tip of Manhattan Island. It was called the 'Battery' because it had been the site of Dutch and later English fortifications.

During his ride across the bay, Jan studied the faces of the people around him. Some were afraid and obviously dreading the events of the next few hours. Others were impatient and anxious to get through the inspection and be off to their destinations. They were crowded together on the little deck, each family huddled over their trunks, boxes, suitcases and bundles wrapped in bedding. They guarded their grimy piles of worn bedding which they had tied with ropes or wires. Among this horde of bewildered peasants were some with only their pitiful, paltry personal belongings. All that they

held dear in the world was tied up in old red and blue bandanas. They clutched them anxiously as they peered over the rail. Steam escaped from their cold breaths as the boat headed towards the tiny island where their fates would be decided. They had shuffled aboard the 'Maasdam' with Jan at Rotterdam, forsaking the security of their Polish, Dutch, Hungarian and other villages and hamlets, leaving behind the friends of their youth or of their old age.

The old pressed forward without a hope of returning to the 'old country'. The young like Jan Bachara accepted the challenge with youthful daring.

As the immigration craft bore down toward its destination in the harbor, Jan turned to see others weeping and whispering to each other their hopes and fears. He closed his eyes and prayed to himself as he had been taught in the church at Wojnicz. "Zdrowas Maria"... "Hail Mary". His prayer was interrupted as the little vessel coasted into the slip at the barge office.

Jan moved along with the other immigrants as they stepped from the gangplank and on to the land. He thought to himself, "What is next? What is this place?" The barge office was then the temporary immigration station being used while the new facility at Ellis Island was nearing completion.

Ellis Island is one of the islets off the New Jersey shore of the upper bay of New York. They are in the shallow water west of the ship channel, sometimes called the Jersey Flats. In colonial times they were referred to as the Oyster Islands. Samuel Ellis once owned one of these islands after purchasing it from the Dutch West India Company. Samuel Ellis died in 1794.

In 1808, the two and three-quarter acre "sand bank" was purchased by the United States for \$10,000. New York had long been the primary port of immigration to the United States, and since 1855, the state had received immigrants at Castle Garden on the 'Battery'.

The federal government left the control of immigration largely in the hands of the states until 1875. Enforcement of existing immigration laws was charged to port collectors who were to make their inspections aboard ship. They were to forbid the landing of oriental coolies and prostitutes. In 1882 an expanded federal law excluded "any convict, lunatic, or any person unable to care for himself or herself without becoming a public charge." In 1892, eight years before the arrival of Jan Bachara, a facility was built on Ellis Island in the shadow of Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty. It was

conducted and managed by the Federal Government after the Castle Garden Depot, mismanaged by the State of New York, was closed for corruption and improper treatment of immigrants.

In 1892, a young Irish girl from County Cork was the first immigrant to step ashore from the landing barge. The commissioners presented her with a ten dollar gold piece. That year saw 445,987 immigrants admitted through the Port of New York. Germany, Ireland, England, Sweden and Norway, the leading emigration nations were still sending considerable numbers of their sons and daughters, but Italy, Russia, Poland, Hungary and Austria were sending more. Things continued "as normal" at Ellis Island until the summer of 1897. Then a fire of unknown origin burnt the hastily built wooden facility to the ground.

The operation of processing the incoming immigrants was transferred to the Barge Office on the 'Battery.' There the conditions that had given Castle Garden a bad name prevailed and the Barge Office also quickly became known for corruption and brutality.

Plans for a new fireproof station were implemented and the existing facility known today was completed and opened at the end of 1900. The staff

that returned there from the 'Battery' brought with them the same sinister habits. Now it was Jan Bachara's turn to experience them. First there was the medical examination of the aliens. Staff members treated Jan and the other immigrants like they were examining an automobile for purchase. Defects, derangements and symptoms of disease were often recognizable by watching a person twenty-five feet away. Their hands, eyes and throat were given a closer examination. Passing these "tests", Jan and the others continued through the processing. To make things run fairly smoothly in that mixed crowd of poor, bewildered immigrants, they were tagged with numbers corresponding to the number on their manifests after they had been landed from the barges and taken into the building for their medical examination.

Jan and his new friends were grouped together according to their manifest numbers and channeled into the inspection lines. There were over twenty lines of inspection that day. The inspector sat at the end of the line with his manifest before him. There he proceeded to cross-examine each alien.

Before a barrage of questions such as...sex?, married status?, occupation?, where born?, where last resided?, where going?, by whom was

the passage paid?, is that person in the United States or not?, if so, how long?, to whom is the alien going?

Jan Bachara did his best wondering what it was all about and when and how it would end. Finally it was all over for him. He had successfully been passed by both the medical officer and the immigration inspector.

He smiled, nodded and walked through the exit doors and went into the railroad waiting-room and ticket office. Now he would wait for the barge that would take him to the railroad terminals on the New Jersey side for his passage to Chicago.

Jan Bachara was one of the lucky ones. One of the eighty percent who generally passed the tests without a problem. The twenty percent, who did not pass, were sent to the detention areas. There most of them regretted ever coming to America. Tales of abusive and inhuman treatment given them have been documented in the hearings and investigations during and shortly after the time Jan came to America in 1900.

The detained aliens were hustled about and sworn at in foul language. The detention quarters were known as 'pens' and were in filthy condition. In the 'dining room' where they had often been fed only prunes and bread, the

floor was covered with pieces of bones (from when they were fed some scraps of meat), grease, and unknown animal parts.

The unfortunate immigrants were fed without the use of knives, forks or spoons. The same moldy bowls were used over and over again without being washed for weeks at a time. At the food stands, the employees of the concessionaire first tried to persuade, then forced the aliens to buy food at exorbitant prices. In the kitchens the immigrants were often forced by threat of deportation, to perform cleaning-up service.

Most of the administrators and trained staff, as difficult as it was, did try to protect the aliens from robbery and abuse. Unfortunately, most of the twenty percent that had been detained were sent back to Europe.

Sometimes it was on the same ship they had arrived on. Usually it was on the next ship of the line that had brought them. The waiting time was generally one or two weeks. If Jan Bachara had been one of those unfortunate aliens deported back to Europe in 1900, it staggers my imagination to even think how events and circumstances would have differed from what and how they are today.

Jan slept on the bench in the waiting-room that night. The next morning he planned on purchasing a one-way coach ticket to Chicago. The fare was posted as thirteen dollars.

He was startled by all the noise. It woke him from a sound sleep at 5:00 A.M. the next morning. It was the shouting and cursing of some of the men he remembered seeing on the 'Maasdam.' "What is happening here?" he asked in Polish, still half asleep. "It's a damn thief, that's what! We are going to take care of him for good when we get our hands on that bastard." One man shouted to Jan in Polish. Then Jan was told the story. A young Polish immigrant, who had just been admitted the afternoon before, was approached this morning by a man in uniform who demanded to check his money. The new arrival had a new twenty-dollar bill that he had received in exchange for his Austrian money. He obligingly displayed the new bill. The man in uniform then took it and told him that it was a fake and no good for anything. He gave the young Pole a foreign coin worth about twenty-cents and ran through the double-doors and into the gathering crowd. The man in uniform had disappeared and the angry Poles were going looking for him. Jan went with the three other immigrants. After several minutes they all realized that finding him in the morning crowd would be nearly impossible.

They knew that he probably was a half-mile away by then. The four of them walked to the concession stand and each ordered two pain cake-donuts and black coffee. This was their first breakfast in America.

They were not very happy about the loss of the young man's twenty dollars, and they said so in no uncertain terms when the police arrived.

Patrolmen Francis McShane and Timothy Lynch from the sixteenth precinct responded to the call to investigate the disturbance in the waiting room. "What the hell are you polkas up to now and why all the noise here?" Lynch demanded, half barking at the new immigrants. Jan as yet didn't know enough English to respond, so he remained silent. One of the men from the 'Maasdam' knew a little English. He replied in a broken accent, "Some damn thief stole a young Pole's money that's what!" "Where is he now?" asked the other patrolman. "No one knows where he ran off to", someone in the milling crowd responded. "Well," said Lynch, "if he shows himself again, hold him and call us; we will take care of him."

The two officers turned, winked to each other and walked away spinning their nightsticks. "Damn noisy bunch of polkas from this boat," they whispered to each other. "They're getting to be as bad as the damn dagos."

By now the New York Central train No. 482 to Cleveland, Ohio was taking-on its passengers, coal and water. This would be the first leg of Jan's journey to Chicago. He received directions from the ticket agent and walked quickly to gate 11. He stepped up on the platform with a suitcase in each hand. They were both made of brown leather. He had bought them in a second-hand shop in Tarnow three weeks before he left Lukanowice. They were almost like new. He had paid ninety zlotys for them. He felt that was a fair price considering their condition and they were a matched pair. Now the two suitcases held all of his worldly possessions as he headed for Chicago on the western beaches of Lake Michigan.

Jan walked through the first three coaches. They were all filled. In the fourth coach he found some space. He took a seat next to a man with a big mustache. They both nodded when their eyes met. Jan imagined the man to be from somewhere in Western Europe.

"Guten tag," the German spoke first. "Guten tag mein herr," Jan replied in his crisp German dialect. As a rule most Europeans are able to speak at least one other language. Jan Bachara spoke German as fluently as he did Polish. Jan asked the German how far he was going. "Cleveland,

Ohio," the German replied. "Gut, I shall ride that far with you and we can talk," Jan responded. "Gut," replied the German, "und where are you going mein herr?" "I am heading for Chicago," Jan said. "But I shall have to change trains in Cleveland, they told me at the ticket window." "I will help you to find your connecting train in Cleveland. Now let us both look out the window and see what our new country looks like," the German said.

"Before we do that however, allow me to introduce myself," the German offered. He extended his hand and said, "Otto Hauptmann from Neuremberg." Jan shook his hand firmly and replied, "Jan Bachara from Lukanowice, near Tarnow."

"Tarnow...that is east of Krakow is it not?" the German asked. "Ja," replied Jan Bachara, "about thirty-two kilometers." "I knew it was somewhere in that region," the German responded.

The train pulled out of the station at 3:00 P.M. that afternoon. There was still ample daylight left for them to see the area around New York City. They peered out the dirty coach windows in amazement. The New York Central train headed due west. The train rolled across New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Fourteen hours later they were pulling into Cleveland, Ohio on the southern shore of Lake Erie. It was now approaching 6:00 A.M. the

following morning as they pulled into the Cleveland Terminal Tower. When the train stopped, Jan and the German got up and left the coach-car. Herr Hauptmann asked Jan if he would care to join him for some sandwiches and coffee at the café in the terminal. Jan suggested that he first find where his connection to Chicago would be. The German nodded in agreement. They walked up to a conductor standing near Gate 4, smoking a cigar. They asked in broken English for his help. The conductor told them that Jan's ticket was for a connecting train, the Pennsylvania RR No. 406. It was bound for Chicago, departing from Gate 16 at 9:00 A.M.

It was nearly 8:00 A.M. Now, he told them. The two immigrants thanked the conductor for his help and looked up at the huge clock hanging on the station wall. It was 7:52 and they had an hour left together.

The men walked into the café. After some difficulty in translating the menu, they both had their breakfast of ham and cheese sandwiches and black coffee. After they had finished eating, the German stood up and excused himself. He shook Jan's hand, wished him good luck in America, and after paying his share of the check, left the café. Jan finished his cigarette. He paid his bill, left the café, and walked to Gate 16.

At Gate 16 he boarded the Pennsylvania Railroad 9:00 A.M. train to Chicago. He found an empty seat next to the window in the second coach-car. He put his two suitcases in the overhead luggage rack and sat looking out the window until the conductor came and validated his ticket. A few minutes later his head slumped and he fell asleep.

Jan hardly felt the train's locomotive wheels start up, spin, catch hold and slowly pull the coaches out of the depot. He slept off and on for six hours. He was now fully awake as the train was pulling into South Bend, Indiana. It was late in the afternoon. He tried, but it was futile to see anything out the window. Freezing rain covered the glass. The sleet was driven by a northwest wind over Lake Michigan. It had dropped six inches of snow before turning to freezing rain in South Bend.

Before entering the depot, the train took on additional coal and water in the yard. The conductor hurriedly walked through the cars before the train pulled in. He passed Jan's seat. Jan asked in broken English how long they would stay here before departing for Chicago. The conductor replied "one hour." Jan looked at his pocket watch. It was 3:00 P.M. Now, that meant that they would depart at 4:00 P.M. Jan decided to go into the station, get a cup of coffee and smoke a cigarette or two before re-boarding. Forty minutes

later he returned and took the same seat he had been sitting in before. Just a few passengers boarded the train in South Bend. They were predominantly black. Jan had never seen a black man in Europe. He had heard about them. Now he had seen them. If they leave me alone, that's fine with me, I'll leave them alone, he thought to himself.

On time, the train pulled out. Its wheels were screeching and spinning as the engineer opened the throttle and the boiler man shoveled coal into the flaming fire-box. Slowly, the seventeen car train crept out of the station, snaked its way through the yard and on to the westbound track for Chicago.

It was 4:14 A.M. when Jan awoke slumped in the coach-seat. Dawn had not yet broken on the morning of February 2, 1900. He thought to himself that tomorrow would be his parent's 25th anniversary. He had tears in his eyes. The train was passing the steel mills of Gary and East Chicago, Indiana. They glowed in the darkness. Soon they would be pulling into the Union Station of Chicago some twenty-two miles in the distance. Jan's eyes were darting from side to side as he looked out the window at the frozen, snow-covered cityscape.

An hour later the train entered the yards and was switched to track 8. It slowly entered the station and stopped as the steam was released from the

brake-lines. A few seconds later the conductor walked through the coaches exclaiming "Chicago, everybody off." Jan Bachara was at the end of his very long journey from Poland.

He rose and departed the train. Brown leather bags in hand, he walked the quarter-mile into the massive structure called Chicago's Union Station. Scores of railroads terminated in the Union Station in 1900 making the city the "crossroads of the nation." Jan was very impressed at the sight of all the people coming and going from different trains.

The conductor had privately told Jan to go and see the man at the P.R.C.U. booth when he arrived at Union Station. Jan asked several porters and conductors and anyone in a uniform if they knew where the booth was. They couldn't understand Jan's broken English, shrugged their shoulders and ignored his pleas. A Pullman porter finally understood Jan. He did know of the P.R.C.U. booth in the station and pointed Jan in the right direction. Jan thanked him very much. He quickly found it.

He asked the middle-aged man sitting behind the P.R.C.U. (Polish Roman Catholic Union) travelers advisory station, in Polish, where he could get a room and find work, any work. Three other immigrants were sitting and smoking on a nearby bench. They were told to wait and see if any others

would get off Jan's train. The three had arrived earlier that morning on the Erie Railroad train No. 62.

The man from the P.R.C.U. gave Jan and the others directions in Polish, to a Rose Street address. (Now Bishop Street). It was 800 North (Chicago Avenue) and 1430 West (Rose Street). Two blocks east of Ashland Avenue.

The four men began walking from the station just outside of Chicago's downtown in a northerly direction some six streets until they reached Chicago Avenue. Jan quickly understood that in Chicago, streets are referred to as 'blocks'. Six streets always meant six blocks.

They then boarded the westbound Chicago Avenue streetcar for the last part of the trip. It was operated by the Chicago Surface Lines.

The temperature that February morning was in the high 20's and the wind was from the west. The day was a rather pleasant one, Jan thought to himself.

The four men got off the streetcar at Rose Street and quickly found house No. 805. It was just a few doors from the corner. It was a rooming-house owned by a Polish widow, Pani Zosia Sobczak. She had a policy of only renting the rooms to single, male Polish immigrants like Jan

and his new friends. She knew from past experiences that they would always pay the rent on time.

Jan stayed there for eight months working at whatever jobs he could get in the factories located, it seemed, everywhere. If he couldn't walk to work, he would always be able to take the Chicago Avenue streetcar to get to work, with transfers, anywhere in the city. His new city.

Part Three

In the autumn of 1901, after a year and a half in America, Jan Bachara answered a help-wanted ad in the 'Chicagoski', the Polish newspaper with the largest circulation in Chicago. He was quickly hired at the Wahl Eversharp Pen Company. He was assigned to an assembly line manufacturing Eversharp fountain pens. His job was to polish and buff the brass shafts of the pens as they came down the conveyer belt from the production department. His job title was 'Polisher'.

The months and seasons passed on Rose Street for Jan. He now was managing to save quite a few dollars from his weekly wages at the pen company. It was time, he thought, to seriously settle down and find a woman that he could love and marry. He found that person in tiny Victoria Plocica.

After a several month courtship, they were married on November 24, 1902. Their marriage was blessed by Rev. John Szczypa, a Resurrectionist priest at St. John Cantius Church at 825 North Carpenter St. in Chicago. It was Victoria's parish. The witnesses were Jan's best friend, Peter Rzamarz, and Jan's brother Szymon, who had arrived in America by the same route as his brother only four months earlier.

The history of Victoria and the Pocica and Plocica families is presented in the chapter entitled "The Pocica-Plocica Family from the village of Grudna Gorna in the parish of Siedliska Bogusz."

Aunt Mae Ermilio-Grabos, Jan and Victoria's third daughter, recalled hearing this anecdote. When her parents were newly married in 1902, Grandma Victoria got a job which annoyed her husband very much. She was a cleaning lady at the Boston Store at State and Madison Streets in downtown Chicago. She would walk each evening from their flat on Rose Street (now Bishop Street) to the store after it closed. Every evening she cleaned the store with several other Polish immigrants. She returned home very late at night and weary to the bone. After several weeks of this grueling routine Grandpa Jan would have no more of that work for his new bride.

"Ok," he said, "If you want to work, I'll stay home from the factory. You make the money and provide for me and the household." He did just that. He stayed home from the fountain pen factory for two days. He just sat around the house reading all the Polish newspapers. Finally Grandma got the message. She gave in and quit the cleaning job at the Boston Store.

Grandpa Jan went back to work at the pen factory and peace was quickly restored in the Bachara household. Soon afterwards their first child, Stella (Stanislawa) was born on September 9, 1903 on Rose Street.

Grandma Victoria was a deeply religious woman. It would be unthinkable for her to ever miss going to mass on Sunday, no matter how ill she would be, or how bad the weather would be. She went not once, but twice each Sunday to her church. She went to mass in the morning and vespers in the afternoon.

She would make the five block trips always by the same route. There was never a deviation. She would walk east on Pearson Street for two blocks to Ashland Avenue. Then south on Ashland two more blocks to Superior Street. There she would cross Ashland Avenue and walk one more block east on Superior to Armour Street. There stood the church. Her church.

It was a magnificent structure called Holy Innocents Church.
Grandma Victoria called it by its Polish name... 'Swietych Mlodziankow'.

The history of Holy Innocents Church and its parish is rather
interesting...

In 1099, the year Jan Bachara immigrated to America, there stood on the northeast corner of Superior and Bickerdike (now called Bishop Street), the German Lutheran Parish of St. John the Evangelist. It consisted of a wooden church on a brick foundation. There was a rectory and a six-room schoolhouse. Parishioners of this German congregation had begun selling their homes to the newly emigrated Poles and resettled about a mile to the west. Overtures were made for the German church property by the Catholic Diocese of Chicago. After much haggling, the Catholic authorities completed the purchase for \$54,000 in July, 1905. On October 9, 1905, Archbishop James Quigley appointed Rev. John Zwierchowski, then Asst. at St. Michael's in South Chicago, as the founding Pastor of the new Polish parish.

On Sunday, October 22, 1905, Father John celebrated the first mass.
In October 1910, work began on a massive new church edifice at the northeast corner of Superior and Armour Streets.

Because of the many labor strikes, the work progressed very slowly. It took two years to finally complete the new church. Finally came the day of joy and jubilation.

The homes in the neighborhood were all decorated in American, Polish, and Papal colors. Arches were built over the path of the procession. Societies like the Polish Roman Catholic Union (P.R.C.U.) and the Polish National Alliance (P.N.A.) came with banners and lined the streets. Even an orchestra blared the arrival of Archbishop Quigley who came to bless the new church on October 20, 1912.

It had been completed at a cost of \$131,000 with an additional \$23,000 spent on an organ, pews, altar and other necessities. The newly erected Byzantine Romanesque church was one of the most beautiful churches in the Chicago Archdiocese. It is 183 feet long and 70 feet wide at the entrance. It has a seating capacity in excess of 1,400. Inside, one large window depicts the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. Thus the name, Holy Innocents Church.

The attention of the parishioners was then directed to the rising school enrollment and the need for additional classrooms. In 1914, construction

began on a three-story brick structure at the northwest corner of Superior and Bishop Streets.

When the school was dedicated on February 14, 1915, the day after Jan Bachara declared his loyalty to the American constitution and renounced Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, one thousand and thirty-five Polish-American students were enrolled. Stella Bachara, their first daughter was in the third grade and her brother Joseph was in the first grade.

As the years passed, Holy Innocents Church and school continued to grow. In September 1919, the fifth Bachara child, Chester, my dad, was enrolled in the first grade. By 1920, close to nine thousand people were on the list of parishioners and forty-two separate societies were active in the parish. There was something available for everyone.

The year 1923 saw the school reach its peak enrollment of 2,694 Polish-Catholic boys and girls. In the fall of that year the Pastor, Father John, who by now had become a close family friend (and drinking buddy) of the Bachara family, directed the construction of a new convent at the southwest corner of Superior and Bishop Streets. This spacious three-story brick building with accommodations for thirty-four nuns was completed in June, 1924. As the parish grew, so did the number of priests serving at Holy

Innocents increase. This required an addition to the rectory, which was completed in 1941.

On October 23, 1955 the church was filled to capacity for the solemn mass of Thanksgiving at which Cardinal Stritch presided over the Golden Jubilee Mass. Father John Zwierchowski was named Domestic Prelate and bestowed the title Right Reverend Monsignor in August of 1957. Three years later on April 23, 1960 after celebrating his fifty-fifth year as Pastor at Holy Innocents Church, "Father John" died. He will always be remembered fondly by many. Dad remembered "Father John" very well. He was the priest that married him in 1933.

Part Four

The morning was partly cloudy. There were nine inches of fresh snow that had fallen the day and night before on the streets and sidewalks of Chicago. The wind was blowing westerly from the lake causing the snow to drift against the storefronts in downtown Chicago. The temperature was hovering at eight degrees and more snow was expected that evening.

On that winter morning, Thursday, February 13, 1915, thirty-seven men gathered outside the doors of Room 16 of the Superior Court of Cook

County, Illinois. Some were still shivering, having just come in from the street. Others had been inside the lobby of the courthouse for a half-hour or so and were only now becoming thawed after their walk down Dearborn Street from the streetcar stop.

At 9:30 A.M. the doors to Room 16 were opened by a guard in a dark brown uniform. He motioned to the men to enter the room and take seats. They all filed in, looked around the large ornate room and randomly sat down on the old, worn, deeply polished mahogany benches.

Every man that had come that bitter cold morning was wearing some kind of hat or cap. When they entered the room they quickly removed them. Their caps and felt fedoras were in their hands or on their laps as they sat there looking around the flag-draped, high-ceilinged room. Some of the men seemed nervous while others appeared calm and happy. They were a mixed group to say the least. Most had large mustaches. Quite a few of them had full beards. They were all cleanly scrubbed and dressed in their finest suits and ties. Some did not own a suit but had borrowed the one they were wearing. Their ages ranged from twenty-two to fifty. Their places of birth and their country's ruling monarch's at that time were as follows:

Austria....Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria

Belgium....Albert I, King of the Belgians

Germany....William II, Emperor of Germany

Hungary....Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria

Roumania....Ferdinand I, King of Roumania

Russia....Nicholas II, Emperor of all the Russians

Scotland....George V, King of Great Britain and Ireland

Sweden....Gustavus V, King of Sweden

The youngest man in the group of early arrivals at the courtroom was Stanley Wankat. He lived at 1331 N. Ashland Ave. He was ruggedly handsome with his black mustache. He was single and a shoemaker. His shop was on the street level. He lived in the flat upstairs over the shop. He gave his age as twenty-two.

Stanley lived with his older brother, Rudolph, who was also single, twenty-four and also a shoemaker. The Wankat brothers came together from their flat that morning on the Ashland Avenue streetcar. They showed no signs of being nervous at all. Rudolph appeared a bit sleepy however, after partying rather late the night before with his girlfriend, Wanda Pietrowska.

The oldest man of the thirty-seven was Jan Grzeyoszek, aged fifty. He was married and had seven children. He and his family lived in a

two-bedroom house at 1540 N. Wood Street, a few houses south of North Ave. He gave his occupation as a laborer. Most of the men in the room were married with families like Jan Bachara, but some were single like the Wankat brothers. A few of the men were friends and lived near each other. Most of the others were strangers. Probably they would never see each other again.

That bitter cold morning in February, 1915, one after another, the immigrants would petition the Superior Court of Cook County, Illinois for American citizenship. All of them, five years earlier in 1910, had come to that same courtroom and declared their intent to do so. On March 19, 1910, Jan Bachara declared his intention for citizenship in the United States of America.

He lived then at 817 Rose Street (now Bishop Street) with his wife Victoria and their children: Stella (8), Joseph (6), Mitchell (4) and baby Jean (6 months). She was affectionately known as 'Ginka'. The document is abstracted as follows:

Abstract of Declaration of Intention for Citizenship No. 10679
as recorded in Book No. 61B, Page 202 of the
Records of the Superior Court of Cook County, Illinois

I, Jan Bachara, aged 35 years, occupation polisher, do declare on oath that my personal description is: Color white, complexion fair, height 5'5", weight 150 lbs., color of hair brown, color of eyes blue. I was born in Lukanowice, Austria on the 18th day of November 1875. I now reside at 817 Rose Street, Chicago, Illinois. I emigrated to the United States of America from Rotterdam, Holland on the vessel "MAASDAM"; my last foreign residence was Lukanowice, Austria.

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, and particularly to Francis Joseph Emperor of Austria of which I am now a subject. I arrived at the Port of New York on or about the 26th day of January 1900. I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein.

SO HELP ME GOD

(Signed) Jan Bachara

(Dated) March 19, 1910

The five year waiting period was now over. The day had come. It was February, 1915 and most of the immigrant's nations were now at war with each other. That morning each would renounce forever their former sovereigns and swear a new allegiance to the constitution of the United States of America. Aunt Stella Bachara that morning was thirteen years old. Uncle Joe was eleven; Uncle Mitchell was nine; Aunt Jean ('Ginka') was six; my dad, Chester, was a little boy of four; Uncle Ed was an infant of one. Mae, Aloysius (Alex), Adolph and Stanley would be born later.

That morning their father, Jan Bachara, would be the thirteenth man to step up to the desk at the front of the courtroom. He would raise his right hand and swear allegiance to the constitution and renounce his subjection to Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and Apostolic Knight of Hungary.

In February, 1915, when my grandfather Jan and the other thirty-six men made their petition for U. S. citizenship, World War I was raging in the lands they had come from. The historians would call it 'The Great War'. How could anyone know then that it would be the first of two world conflicts.

Men and boys, friends and relations that they had grown up with were dying from the tetanus epidemics in the trenches of Europe.

Germany, Austria and Hungary were at war with Serbia, Russia, France, Belgium, and Great Britain. The English luxury liner "Lusitania" would be sunk by two torpedoes from a German submarine three months later on May 7, 1915 with the loss of one hundred and twenty eight American lives.

President Woodrow Wilson was enraged at the sinking of the unarmed pleasure cruiser, and the United States would enter the war two years later in 1917. But now it was still 1915 and classic New Orleans jazz was in full bloom. Later that year Albert Einstein would complete and announce the

formulation of his Theory of Relativity and Jess Willard would defeat Jack Johnson to win the world heavyweight boxing crown.

Jan Bachara, after completing the words of the oath in his broken English, lowered his right hand. The court clerk took one of the several pens on his desk, dipped the point in the blue-black ink well and made a cross mark on the large document lying on the table in front of him. That mark was where Jan Bachara was to sign his name. He handed the pen to Jan who was grinning from ear to ear under his heavy brown mustache. Jan nodded his approval and signed his name as John Bachara not as Jan Bachara.

He signed as an American because he was made an American. The clerk of the court again dipped the pen point and handed the pen to each of John's two sponsors, showing them where to sign the document as witnesses. They were Wojciech (Albert) Plocica, John's brother in law and Joseph Piecuch, John's close friend. They quickly signed. The three men then shook hands, slapped one another on the back and all smiled. Now John too was an American citizen. They shook hands again and John said, "teraz chodźmy do domu...now let's go home." He said it in both Polish and English. The court

clerk said to the three men, "Please move along, there are others waiting in line."

They went outside just as it was starting to snow again. They made their way across Dearborn Street back to the streetcar stop. John Bachara went back to his home at 839 N. Hermitage Street. His family had been living there since they moved after their son Chester (my father) was born in December of 1911.

Victoria's brother Wojciech Polcica went home to 821 N. Hermitage Street, just a few doors away on the same side of the street. Their good friend, Joseph Piecuch went home to 1728 W. Huron Street, a few blocks away.

Tomorrow would be just another work day for each of them. John would get up at 5:30 A.M. He would have his usual breakfast of Victoria's home-made rye bread with perhaps a slice or two of ham or liver sausage. Drink one or two cups of black coffee and smoke a cigarette. Then he would bundle up and take the Ashland Avenue streetcar on the first leg of the trip to the Wahl Eversharp Company where he still worked on the assembly line as a metal polisher of fountain pens.

His brother in law, Wojciech (Albert) was a brass molding maker at a nearby foundry and Joseph Piecuch was a cabinet maker.

It was half-past three that afternoon when John walked up the flight of stairs, knocked the snow off his shoes and opened the door to his house.

Grandma Victoria asked him how the morning went at the courtroom. John hugged her, smiled and said it went very well. "We are all American citizens now, you and I and Stella, Joe, Mitchell, Ginka, Chester, and baby Edek."

"Let's have kieszka and eggs for supper," John said. "I'll walk over to the church and ask Father John if he would like to come over for supper, too, or maybe later tonight."

At 839 N. Hermitage Street, as was the case with most of the surrounding lots on that block, there were two separate closely-built buildings on each lot. This was urban inner-city Chicago and most of the buildings were built before the turn of the century. Any semblance of a yard or garden would be just off the street or between the two buildings. There was a front building and a rear building, both generally made of wood.

John, Victoria and their children lived in the rear building on the second floor. John's mother, Maria (my great-grandmother) lived below them, alone on the first floor.

Maria Pyzyk Bachara is believed to have come to America with her son, Walter, some time after her husband, Jan, died in Lukanowice on May 28, 1911 at the age of almost sixty-one. Maria's grandson, Casimir (Casey) Bachara recalled hearing that she, Maria, returned to Poland in the early 1930's and had died there during World War II. The parish death records confirmed these facts. Maria Pyzyk Bachara died in Lukanowice on October 7, 1941 at the age of eighty-five. She is believed to be buried in the Wojnicz parish cemetery. Her son, Walter, is believed to have returned to Poland with her. There is no record of his death or burial in the Wojnicz parish records. He may have been a casualty of World War II. Perhaps he had been a Polish soldier in the war. Killed or missing in action?

Wladislaw (Walter) Bachara was born in Lukanowice on April 12, 1886. He is known to have married Anna Nosek, who was born in Lukanowice on May 29, 1891. Anna was the daughter of Jan and Rosalee Nosek. Anna (Nosek) Bachara died in Lukanowice on February 14, 1963 at the age of nearly seventy-two.

Aunt Mae, along with her cousin Casey Bachara also recalled her grandmother Maria. Mae was always frightened when she saw her. Maria Bachara was a slight woman who always would be seen wearing a black

babushka. She was a lady who had piercing eyes and always dressed in black. Such was always the custom in Europe. When your husband died, you wore black, as in mourning, for the rest of your life. Chester, my father, and Maria's other grandchildren, had no recollection of her at all.

The rear building at 839 N. Hermitage was situated very near to the old 'L' tracks. It was the old Chicago Surface Lines elevated train tracks. The tracks were torn down many years ago when that service became unprofitable and was discontinued. Dad recalled coming home on the 'L' from downtown Chicago one day. He was sitting in a seat next to an open window. He was returning home with a brand new Panama straw hat that he paid a lot for at Baskins. A sudden gust of wind took the hat off his head and right out the train's window it went.

He watched it sailing across the back yards as the train roared along the tracks. That was a brand new hat that he wanted to wear on a date that evening with Jean Turbak.

In the front building at 839 N Hermitage Street on the first floor lived Stanley and Mary Niedojadlo. Grandma Victoria's sister and brother-in-law and their five daughters.

On the second floor were the Janas brothers, John and Andrew. Living with them as a boarder was another bachelor, Joseph Szupak. In the basement flat there lived and worked as a shoemaker. No one could recall his name. Across the street was 847 n. Hermitage at the corner of Clarendon Street (now called Pearson). At the street level there was a grocery store. On the second floor about the grocery lived Grandpa John's brother, Andrew Bachara, with his family. Grandma Victoria's brothers also lived a few houses away on Hermitage Street.

Nearby was Frank Podraza's Tavern. It was busy every evening. Six houses away was the Janas candy store. The candy store was a bootleg alcohol pick-up point during the prohibition years. Casey Bachara and his cousin Chester, my dad, were often sent for half-pints of alcohol for their fathers, Szymon and John respectively. The Bachara brothers, always enterprising, would dilute the grain alcohol that they got from Janas' candy store, with an equal amount of distilled water. Then they added caramel for coloring, thus making their own private brand of 'blended whiskey'.

Casey Bachara recalled his dad, Szymon, getting picked-up with the illegal booze one day on the way home from the candy store. He was taken to the police lock-up at the Racine Ave. station house, just off Chicago

Avenue across from Walter Podrazik's tavern. Dad recalled that Walter Podrazik always wore a black derby hat. He also recalled going to Holy Innocents School with tavern keeper's daughter, Josephine Podrazik.

The Szymon Bachara family lived only three blocks away from his brother John, on Erie and Paulina Streets. John and Victoria's family now numbered ten. Their home at 839 N. Hermitage Street simply could not accommodate them all any longer. Grandpa John withdrew all his savings from the neighborhood Polish American Bank on Chicago Avenue and purchased the corner building at 847 N. Paulina Street. There the storefront was a combination grocery and meat market. He eventually quit his job at Wahl Eversharp and now went into business for himself as the proprietor of Bachara's Midwest Grocery Store. The year was 1919. Mitchell was still only twelve years old, but his father, John, planned that he would run the business and be the butcher in a few years time.

The Bachara Midwest Grocery and Meat Market prospered for the family through the roaring twenties following World War I and through the depression years of the thirties. John Bachara was well liked in the predominantly Polish neighborhood. He was considered by all to be a fair merchant and honest businessman.

Victoria would give birth to her last two sons, Adolph in 1920 and Stanley in 1923. Each of the Bachara sons and daughter's lives are presented in the following Parts Five through Fourteen.

In the late 1930's and early 1940's, John Bachara's health began to fail. On October 23, 1942 he passed away at home on the second floor at 847 N. Paulina Street at the age of almost sixty-seven. His Physician was Theodore Worth, M.D. His office was located at 814 N. Ashland Ave., just north of Chicago Avenue.

Grandpa John's death was caused by chronic myocarditis and hypertension which he had for several years. The contributing cause of death was cancer of the prostate gland. He was mourned by his family and friends at the Ben F. Malec Funeral Home located nearby at 834 N. Ashland Ave. It is still operating today at the same address. Following a requiem mass celebrated by his old friend and drinking buddy, "Father John", at Holy Innocents Church, John Bachara was interred on October 26 in St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Niles, Illinois in Section 50. I was only eight years old at the time.

Grandma Victoria continued to live with her daughter, Aunt Jean ('Ginka'), who remained single, after Grandpa John's death. World War II was intensifying in both the Pacific and in Europe. Mitchell, who was now

the manager and butcher of the store, was drafted into the Army Air Force in May of 1942 and the Bachara grocery store and meat market closed its doors and never re-opened. Mitchell's younger brother, Stanley, had been inducted into the U.S. Army nine months earlier in August 1941 on his eighteenth birthday. Four months later on December 7, the United States declared war on the Empire of Japan.

Grandma Victoria Bachara died on November 26, 1958. It was sixteen years after her husband, John. She too, died at home on the second floor at 847 N. Paulina Street. Her cause of death was carcinoma of the uterus and a urinary tract infection. She was seventy-nine years old. Her Physician was Stanley M. Koziol, M.D. He was her nephew, her sister Catherine's son. His office was then located at 1048 N. Milwaukee Avenue. I recall that it was Dr. Stanley Koziol, who gave me my Weber High School physical entrance examination ten years earlier in September, 1948.

Dr. Stanley Koziol, M.D. died at the age of only sixty in December, 1973. Not very much is known about his family.

Grandma Victoria too, was mourned by her family and friends at the Ben F. Malec Funeral Home. Following a Requiem Mass at her beloved Holy Innocents Church, she was interred on November 29, 1958 next to her

husband, John in Section 50, Lot 2326 of St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Niles, Illinois.

I was unable to attend her funeral. I was stationed at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, in the U.S. Army.

When she died, her will stated that each of her living children were to receive \$1,000 and the house on Paulina St. would go to her daughter Jean.

Aunt Jean ('Ginka') sold the house years later, with all its contents for only \$15,000, and moved into a flat across the street to 854 N. Paulina.

As her health began to fail, she moved to Twin Lakes, Wisconsin with her niece Dolores Wunderlich, her husband Harvey and their families. She lived there for several years prior to her death on May 22, 1995 at the age of 85.

The descendants of John and Victoria (Plocica) Bachara are presented in the following pages.

The descendants of John and Victoria (Plocica) Bachara are presented as follows:

Part Five.....Stella Veronica Bachara Hoffman b 9 Sep 1903

d 3 Sep 1951

Part Six.....Joseph J. Bachara b 19 Mar 1905 d 9 Sep 1980

Part Seven.....Mitchell A. Bachara b 8 Mar 1907 d 14 Dec 1968

Part Eight.....Genevieve S. ('Ginka') Bachara b 4 Oct 1909 d 22 May
1995

Part Nine.....Chester J. Bachara b 10 Dec 1911 d 5 Sep 1996

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| Part Ten..... | Edward J. Bachara | b 23 Feb 1914 | d 2 Sep 1982 |
| Part Eleven.... | Marianna (Mae) Bachara | | |
| | Ermilio-Grabos | b 28 Dec 1915 | d 2 Nov 1986 |
| Part Twelve.... | Aloysius (Alex) Bachara | b 9 Mar 1918 | d Mar 1919 Age 1 year |
| Part Thirteen... | Adolph J. Bachara | b 9 Jan 1920 | d 14 Aug 1933 Age 13 |
| Part Fourteen... | Stanley J. Bachara | b 21 Aug 1923 | d 30 Aug 2002 |